

Appl. No. 10/013,984
Amdt. Dated April 29, 2004
Reply to Office Action of January 29, 2004

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (currently amended): A topsheet for disposable wearing articles which comprises:

a nonwoven fabric having an upper surface and a lower surface; and

a plurality of openings formed in said nonwoven fabric, said plurality of openings extending through both said upper and lower surfaces,

each of said plurality of openings having an area of about 0.16 - 5 mm² and a periphery portion adjacent said upper surface in which only a part of the periphery portion has an increased thickness as compared to an adjacent thickness of said nonwoven fabric so as to form protuberances that extend upward from said upper ~~surface~~ surface, said protuberances having a density which is higher than a density of surrounding portions of said nonwoven fabric extending around said protuberances.

Claim 2 (previously presented): The topsheet according to Claim 1, wherein said nonwoven fabric has a longitudinal direction and a transverse direction both orthogonal to a thickness direction of said

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nonwoven fabric and said protuberances are formed aside of said plurality of openings in one of said longitudinal and transverse directions.

Claim 3 (previously presented): The topsheet according to Claim 1, wherein said protuberances have a thickness which is about 0.1 - 2 mm greater than a thickness of the adjacent thickness of said nonwoven fabric.

Claim 4 (canceled):

Claim 5 (original): The topsheet according to Claim 1, wherein a total area of said plurality of openings occupies 2 - 60 % of a surface area of said nonwoven fabric.

Claim 6 (original): The topsheet according to Claim 1, wherein said nonwoven fabric is made of thermoplastic synthetic fibers.

Claim 7 (original): The topsheet according to Claim 1, wherein said upper surface of said nonwoven fabric is covered with a plurality of ribbon-like thermoplastic synthetic resin film strips spaced in parallel to one another and extending in one of a longitudinal direction and a transverse direction.

Claim 8 (new): A topsheet for disposable wearing articles which comprises:

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a nonwoven fabric having an upper surface and a lower surface; and
a plurality of openings formed in said nonwoven fabric, said plurality of openings extending through both said upper and lower surfaces,
each of said plurality of openings having an area of about $0.16 - 5 \text{ mm}^2$ and a periphery portion adjacent said upper surface in which only a part of the periphery portion has an increased thickness as compared to an adjacent thickness of said nonwoven fabric so as to form protuberances that extend upward from said upper surface, each of said plurality of openings further having opposed first and second sides and opposed first and second ends and said plurality of protuberances being located exclusively along the first ends of each of the plurality of openings.

Claim 9 (new): The topsheet according to Claim 8, wherein said nonwoven fabric has a longitudinal direction and a transverse direction both orthogonal to a thickness direction of said nonwoven fabric and said protuberances are formed aside of said plurality of openings in one of said longitudinal and transverse directions.

Claim 10 (new): The topsheet according to Claim 8, wherein said protuberances have a thickness which is about $0.1 - 2 \text{ mm}$ greater than a thickness of the adjacent thickness of said nonwoven fabric.

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Claim 11 (new): The topsheet according to Claim 8, wherein said protuberances have a density which is higher than a density of surrounding portions of said nonwoven fabric extending around said protuberances.

Claim 12 (new): The topsheet according to Claim 8, wherein a total area of said plurality of openings occupies 2 - 60 % of a surface area of said nonwoven fabric.

Claim 13 (new): The topsheet according to Claim 8, wherein said nonwoven fabric is made of thermoplastic synthetic fibers.

Claim 14 (new): The topsheet according to Claim 8, wherein said upper surface of said nonwoven fabric is covered with a plurality of ribbon-like thermoplastic synthetic resin film strips spaced in parallel to one another and extending in one of a longitudinal direction and a transverse direction.